

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR SOFTWARE TECHNICAL SUPPORT AND
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

The present invention is a method and apparatus for supporting and training a user in operating a software application. A list of task indications are coupled to the GUI window. A graphical overlay is positioned on top of the GUI window and coupled to it. A sequence of instructions associated with a respective task is displayed in the graphical overlay upon selection of the task indication by the user. Each instruction directs attention to a respective selectable graphical area in the GUI window. The user operates a selector coupled to the GUI window, where after selecting a task, the selector is used to select graphical areas in response to the sequence of instructions. In the preferred embodiment, the present invention further comprises recorded voice files or a text-to-speech synthesizer coupled to the sequence of instructions, whereby the instruction being displayed is simultaneously presented audibly to the user. The selection of one or more selectable graphical areas in a sequence before selecting a task automatically highlights a list of possible tasks being performed. The present invention is capable of and well suited for operating a computer controlling a system such as a data communication network, where the tasks displayed in the list of task indications are user-privilege specific, and a password is used to restrict the list of task indications to a subset for display. The tasks displayed in the list of task indications are optionally presented to the user as a function of a mode setting, where a mode setting is a beginner, intermediate, or advanced mode setting. One advantage of a GUI coach over the prior art is that the user learns a sequence associated with a task through actively interfacing with the GUI window.